

I have the good fortune to work daily with students seeking a future position in the field of trombone performance or education, a career which requires a very high level of discipline and commitment. Their studies involve not only the usual academic classroom components, but many, many hours of practicing their performing skills. Upon graduation, my students will encounter unusually stiff competition, with as many as several hundred trombonists auditioning for each professional position available in their field. For those who occasionally feel they may not have the "ability" to succeed, it becomes my job to convince them that success is more about hard work than talent. Helping them sustain a high level of intensity during their education means that I must constantly challenge them to reach for the next level.

Because no two students are the same and each enters the program with diverse strengths and weaknesses, I believe that the most effective teaching style is one that is unique to each student. Some students require a more demanding and rigorous approach and react best to hearing only critique, while others are motivated to work harder with liberal doses of positive reinforcement. Figuring out which style of instruction is most effective is a primary concern for me. I am constantly devising ways to effectively communicate new ideas to enable them to conceptualize and realize musical results. Sometimes a concept that works with one student has no effect on another, so having alternative approaches to each problem is necessary. Achieving each student's highest potential is ultimately my goal, and I am continually searching for new and effective ways to accomplish this.

I have the opportunity to guide students in a "one-on-one" setting for their entire study at WMU. I meet with them individually for at least an hour weekly (and frequently more), giving me a chance to help them achieve a very high level of musical success by graduation. As my students' principal on-campus mentor, my influence is considerable. When some students find themselves underachieving due to personal difficulties, my role changes to more of a counselor, helping them to deal with the life skills that they must address during their academic and musical studies.

Experiencing performances of the trombone repertoire is an essential part of their education. I want them to fully understand the many musical possibilities and applications of their instrument and to be aware of the high level of performing in today's musical world. We take annual studio trips to hear Chicago or Detroit Symphony Orchestra concerts. Some students also return to campus in the summer and accompany me to the International Trombone Festival (held throughout the world) or the Eastern Trombone Workshop in Washington D.C. The opportunity to hear and meet renowned trombonists is especially motivating for my students, and the professional musicians they meet also serve as role models for their career development.

Competing in national or international competitions allows my students the chance to see how they compare with the world's most advanced student trombonists. It is rewarding for me to provide support and guidance by accompanying those who are chosen as finalists (including three students who competed in Paris, France last summer). Over the past 10 years, I have been fortunate to have had many winners and finalists in the two most

important student solo trombone competitions in the world--the U.S. Army Band's National Trombone Solo Competition and the International Trombone Association (ITA) competitions. Competing in one of these two events is not only a huge incentive for my students to practice, but it also provides them with feedback about their playing in the form of critique sheets from judges of international stature.

Many of my students present at least one solo recital during their study at WMU, requiring additional rehearsals with accompanists. I believe it is essential that I attend most of these rehearsals, which usually need to be scheduled during evening hours or on weekends due to pianist availability. I gladly attend as a coach to correct not only ensemble balance and intonation problems but to provide "hands on" time with the full ensemble. My students' success underscores the merits of increased individual attention.

I believe it is essential to maintain and supplement my own pedagogical skills by learning from others; an important side benefit of taking students to major conferences is that I can observe other great teachers in their master class presentations. These events keep me abreast of the latest ideas, artists, and music, and are invaluable in helping me to maintain contacts with many of the top trombone professionals. At this point in my career I realize that it is incumbent upon me to maintain the highest degree of visibility and prominence in my field. The professional contacts that I maintain are not only important for my own career, but they are essential for my students. I am often contacted by renowned trombonists who want to visit WMU to work with my students and/or to perform a recital. My own success also results in a level of credibility that allows greater influence in my letters of recommendation for students seeking to pursue their graduate studies at our nation's most elite music schools.

My office door is always open, and my students know that they can drop by any time to ask questions. I am very approachable, and they even feel comfortable contacting me at home during the evening hours if necessary. They know that I take a vested interest in their success and that I will give them my greatest efforts, but that I expect the same from them. As a result, most feel obligated to work hard for me. One recent graduate who was admitted to the master's program at The Juilliard School told me, "Students feel terrible if they think they are letting you down."

I have been fortunate to have taught many wonderful students during my career at WMU, nearly all of them coming from within 120 miles of Kalamazoo. I take great pleasure in knowing that many of these students have achieved success in competition against trombonists from some of the most renowned music programs in the world, all of which have the luxury of attracting the most outstanding students into their programs. Despite the enormous competition, my undergraduates have been chosen as winners in the International Trombone Association competitions five of the past seven years, and finalists, alternates, or honorable mention selections 25 times in 13 years. Since 2000, former students have been admitted to many leading graduate music programs in the United States, including The Juilliard School, Yale University, The Eastman School of Music, Cleveland Institute of Music, Northwestern University, Cincinnati Conservatory, Oberlin Conservatory, University of North Texas, Florida State University, and Indiana University. I continue to maintain contact with most of them and I follow their careers closely.

It's been said that "all the flowers of all the tomorrows are in the seeds of today." Teachers plant seeds that grow forever. To me, the most exciting part of teaching is seeing the many successes of my students and knowing that I have not only opened new doors for them, but that I have been a positive influence on their lives and, through them, subsequent generations of students.